

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

May 6, 2002
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Marshall, Deputy Mayor Degginger, Councilmembers Creighton, Davidson, Mosher, and Noble

ABSENT: Councilmember Lee

1. Executive Session

Deputy Mayor Degginger opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. and announced recess to executive session for approximately 25 minutes to discuss one item of property acquisition and one item of potential litigation.

At 6:31 p.m., the meeting resumed with Mayor Marshall presiding.

2. Study Session

(a) Potential Voter Initiative for Parks and Open Space

City Manager Steve Sarkozy introduced a continuation of Council's ongoing discussions regarding a potential parks and open space voter initiative.

Parks and Community Services Director Patrick Foran noted the memo in Council's desk packet summarizing their April 29th discussion and incorporating input from Councilmembers Lee and Mosher, who were absent from the meeting. Council's combined input indicates a preference for allocating \$31 to 35 million toward development and approximately \$45 million toward acquisition, resulting in a ballot measure of \$76 to 80 million. Annual maintenance and operations costs are estimated at \$830,000 to \$975,000. The projected household impact is \$84 to \$88 per year for capital investments and \$17 to \$20 per year for operational costs.

Referencing Attachment B, Mr. Foran highlighted Council's support of specific items based on input since the April 29th meeting. Four of seven Councilmembers support funding for West Lake Sammamish neighborhood parks. Five Councilmembers support some level of funding for sports field improvements. Four Councilmembers support: 1) Mercer Slough trailhead and SE 40th Street boat launch parking, and 2) Meydenbauer Bay development.

Attachment A summarizes Council consensus. Mr. Foran said staff suggests Council consider eliminating funding for the Mercer Slough trailhead and SE 40th boat launch parking item and Meydenbauer Bay development. Both are complex projects in the early stages of planning. Mr. Foran suggested these projects be funded through the CIP Plan as an alternative. Staff feels the addition of funding for trail and greenway connections and the expansion of North Bellevue Community/Senior Center would help secure voter support of an initiative. Mr. Foran recalled that a City survey indicates 66 percent support by residents for a \$90 million bond measure. He noted that voter support typically erodes somewhat as an election nears. Mr. Foran said the Mercer Slough parking project is complicated due to the permitting process, setback requirements, and Endangered Species Act requirements.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Degginger, Mr. Foran said a conceptual architectural plan has been developed for expansion of North Bellevue Community Center. The project could be completed within 18 to 24 months.

Mr. Mosher spoke to withdraw his support of the Mercer Slough parking project and Meydenbauer Bay development and to endorse funding for expansion of North Bellevue Community Center. Mr. Noble concurred with Mr. Mosher and with staff's recommendation to fund the Mercer Slough parking project through the CIP Plan.

Deputy Mayor Degginger concurred with Mr. Mosher as well. He explained that he initially did not support expansion of North Bellevue Community Center out of a concern for fairness to residents of South Bellevue who do not yet have a community center. However, he is pleased that a South Bellevue community center is already funded in the CIP Plan. Mayor Marshall expressed support for expansion of North Bellevue Community Center. Dr. Davidson concurred.

Mayor Marshall summarized that removal of the Mercer Slough parking and Meydenbauer Bay development items represents a decrease of \$6.5 million, to be replaced by \$2 million in funding for the expansion of North Bellevue Community Center. She asked Council to reconsider funding the trail and greenway connections item.

Responding to Mr. Degginger, Mr. Foran said the Lake to Lake Trail could be completed for approximately \$2-3 million.

Mr. Mosher would support allocating \$2 million to \$3 million to trail and greenway connections.

Mr. Creighton noted that he previously suggested phased funding of neighborhood parks, beginning with \$3 million from a bond measure. He felt the trail and greenway connections would be a good candidate for CIP funding. Similarly, he originally felt sports field improvements should continue to be funded through the CIP Plan.

Deputy Mayor Degginger said he felt neighborhood parks should be funded through the CIP Plan. Mr. Noble explained that he supports neighborhood park development using bond funds, but he felt trail and greenway connections should be funded through the CIP Plan. Mr. Noble suggested adding \$1 million for trails by reallocating funds from neighborhood parks or sports field improvements, if necessary.

Dr. Davidson is a strong advocate of neighborhood parks, primarily because he feels they are used more than some of the larger parks and facilities. He supports up to \$3 million for trails and greenways and \$2 million for sports field improvements.

Mayor Marshall noted Council consensus to allocate \$2 million toward sports field improvements. Mrs. Marshall said she would support up to \$3 million for trails and greenways.

Responding to Mr. Mosher, Mr. Foran said four of the six potential neighborhood parks could be developed fairly quickly. The other two proposed parks would require more time for planning and neighborhood involvement.

Mr. Creighton expressed support, as Co-Chair of the Downtown Implementation Plan Citizen Advisory Committee, for acquiring/preserving open space in the downtown. Mayor Marshall said she would be willing to move her vote for \$2 million for the continued development of Downtown Park to instead be used to acquire smaller open spaces throughout the downtown.

Deputy Mayor Degginger asked staff to provide a detailed estimate of ongoing maintenance and operations costs associated with the projects to be supported through a potential bond measure. Mr. Mosher would like specific information on what can and will be accomplished with a bond measure. Mr. Foran said staff will revise the project matrix and redistribute it to Council.

(b) Deployment Options for Wireless Telecommunication Services

Mr. Sarkozy noted the difficulty of providing wireless telecommunications services while protecting neighborhood character and minimizing the adverse aesthetic impacts. He said the purpose of tonight's discussion is to review cellular equipment options as well as existing and proposed community standards pertaining to this equipment.

Transportation Director Goran Sparman said there is significant demand for wireless services in residential areas. Due to the challenges of implementing this technology, telecommunications providers in the United States have largely been providing wireless applications at lower speeds than what can be provided through broadband access.

David Kerr, Franchise Manager, recalled staff's discussion with Council on March 18 regarding telecommunications policies. He explained that all wireless deployment is regulated by the Land Use Code. The Code includes location and design hierarchies and specifies that residential areas are least preferred in terms of deployment. Wireless providers have complained that current regulations are cumbersome.

Mr. Kerr said staff decided to explore whether some subset of wireless deployment could be achieved through a right-of-way use permitting process instead of the current Land Use Code process. Policy issues include pole design and location, antenna design and location, equipment design and location, and colocation. The most common element in the right-of-way is poles containing street lights and carrying electricity, telephone lines, wireless equipment, and cable television lines. Mr. Kerr said staff recommends tubular metal poles or wood laminate poles.

The tubular metal poles allow internal wiring and provide a cleaner appearance. Wood laminate poles allow conduits and wiring to be enclosed within a sheath attached to the pole.

Mr. Kerr described two types of staff-recommended antennas: 1) canister-enclosed antennas that are essentially an extension of the pole, and 2) flush-mounted antennas extending no more than six inches from the pole. Flush-mounted antennas can be more conspicuous but typically fewer deployments are required compared to the canister-enclosed antenna.

Mr. Kerr said the City currently requires that wireless providers maintain equipment cabinets less than 30 inches high in residential rights-of-way. He noted the City does not place a 30-inch height restriction on any other types of utility cabinets deployed in the right-of-way. Staff recommends allowing the placement of wireless equipment cabinets taller than 30 inches as well as new pole-mounted equipment that straps onto a pole.

Turning to colocation and clustering, Mr. Kerr noted that colocation adds height to a pole resulting in fewer taller deployments instead of more deployments using shorter poles. Colocation of wireless antennas presents the additional challenge of clustering the multiple associated equipment cabinets. However, equipment can be screened with landscaping and fencing.

Mr. Kerr reviewed the next steps to occur should Council wish to proceed with changes to the City's current wireless regulatory approach. Two public hearings would be held to discuss proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments, followed by the development of recommendations by the Planning Commission for presentation to Council. Land Use Code amendments would follow the Comprehensive Plan amendments. The Planning Commission would conduct public hearings to discuss any Land Use Code amendments and to make recommendations to Council.

Mr. Kerr said the first question for Council consideration is whether to continue with the current Land Use Code permitting process for wireless deployment or to allow some subset of clearly defined wireless deployment to be permitted through the right-of-way permitting process.

Deputy Mayor Degginger said the Land Use review approach has the advantage of providing some control over the placement and size of wireless equipment but the disadvantage of slowing down deployment. While the community is eager for expanded wireless deployment, no one wants the equipment adjacent to their home and yard.

Mr. Sarkozy said the current Land Use Code approach has resulted in permitting processes taking up to two years for individual cell towers. The advantage of a right-of-way permitting approach is that the process could be accomplished much quicker.

Mr. Mosher recalled Council's priority of becoming a "Smart City." He feels an expedited process is necessary in order to achieve this goal. Mayor Marshall noted Council consensus to explore staff's recommendations for modifying the City's approach to permitting wireless equipment.

Mr. Kerr said staff recommends the implementation of approved poles, either tubular metal or wood laminate, with heights up to 60 feet.

Responding to Mr. Creighton, Mr. Kerr said the solid wood pole, which is not recommended because of the exterior attachment of wiring and cables, is the least expensive option. Current regulations require wireless carriers to replace wood poles with hollow steel poles, which conceal wiring but are much larger and more expensive. The wood laminate pole option is less expensive and easier to deploy than the steel poles. Tubular poles, which can be used to replace street lights or traffic signal poles, are also less expensive than the hollow steel poles. Wood laminate and tubular poles are both desirable options for Puget Sound Energy, wireless providers, and the City.

Deputy Mayor Degginger expressed concern about pole height and the lack of a dispersion requirement to limit the number of poles deployed. He noted that the Comprehensive Plan addresses the need to minimize visual intrusion in relation to utility facilities.

Mr. Kerr said staff's recommendations are based on compatibility with existing equipment in the right-of-way. There are many 60-foot poles throughout the community and some Puget Sound Energy transmission poles are much higher. Mr. Kerr reminded Council of the tradeoff between fewer taller poles and more smaller poles to accomplish the same deployment goal. He suggested that staff explore this issue further with wireless providers.

Responding to Mr. Degginger, Mr. Kerr said the largest equipment cabinets in use by wireless providers are 70 to 80 inches high. Most wireless providers have equipment cabinets in the 60- to 70-inch range, which is consistent with the size of cabinets currently placed in the right-of-way by other utility providers.

Returning to the pole issue, Mayor Marshall favors the recommended tubular metal and wood laminate poles, limited to a height of 60 feet. She would like some provision for removing old equipment and technology once it is eventually replaced by improved technology and hopefully smaller equipment. She is opposed to staff's recommendation to allow additional pole height for the colocation of equipment.

Mayor Marshall feels the City should screen its own equipment boxes if this is required of utility providers. Mr. Sparrman said the City's equipment cabinets at signalized intersections are not screened because they are accessed on a regular basis by staff. A worker must also be able to view the traffic signal from the box while conducting routine maintenance to assure it is functioning properly. Mr. Sparrman said staff will investigate possible screening solutions.

At 7:59 p.m., Mayor Marshall declared recess to the Regular Session. The Study Session resumed at 9:08 p.m.

Responding to Dr. Davidson, Mr. Kerr said the sheaths on the wood laminate poles are made of the same material as the pole, resulting in a more attractive and uniform appearance.

Mr. Mosher suggested using the tubular metal poles, where possible, in neighborhoods and the less attractive poles in commercial areas.

Planning and Community Development Director Matt Terry said the Land Use Code currently allows providers to install poles exceeding 60 feet if the appropriate procedures are followed. Mr. Terry asked whether Council wants to set a maximum height of 60 feet or continue with the current Land Use Code approach regarding height.

Mayor Marshall proposed establishing a list of approved pole and equipment options that wireless providers could choose from without having to go through Land Use Code review. If a carrier wants a higher pole, clustered equipment, or some other option not on the approved list, the carrier would be required to go through the normal Land Use Code process.

Responding to Mayor Marshall, Councilmembers agreed to allow tubular metal and wood laminate poles up to a maximum height of 60 feet. Mr. Sparrman said staff will prepare alternatives for Council discussion related to regulating the dispersion of poles and equipment.

Regarding antenna types, Mr. Mosher does not like the appearance of the flush-mounted antennas. Mr. Noble and Dr. Davidson expressed support for staff's recommendation to allow both canister-enclosed and flush-mounted antennas. Deputy Mayor Degginger would like to see photos of the different types of antennas in residential areas. Mayor Marshall supports staff's recommendation. She reiterated that the equipment should be removed if eventually replaced with new technology and equipment.

Moving on to equipment cabinet options, Mr. Terry noted there are specific right-of-way locations in which the placement of utility equipment is not allowed.

Mr. Mosher is willing to allow wireless equipment cabinets taller than 30 inches, up to a maximum of five feet tall. He does not like the look of pole-mounted "strap on" equipment. He is in favor of screening requirements.

Mr. Noble suggested placing limits on the footprint and dimensions of equipment cabinets, as well as height. He finds the strap on equipment to be acceptable and favors screening requirements. Mr. Creighton concurred and emphasized his concern about the overall size of equipment cabinets. Mr. Degginger expressed similar concerns about cabinet dimensions.

Dr. Davidson is in favor of limiting the overall dimensions as well. He suggested that screening requirements could be applied only for equipment exceeding a specific size or height.

Mayor Marshall summarized Council consensus to: 1) change the City's current approach to permitting wireless equipment and antennas, 2) ask staff to further define equipment dimensions, 3) allow the use of pole-mounted strap on equipment, and 4) develop guidelines to ensure equipment placement does not conflict with other right-of-way priorities and to ensure appropriate screening.

Deputy Mayor Degginger said he is not willing to consider a change to the portion of Comprehensive Plan Policy UT-55 which states: “Minimize visual intrusion of personal wireless communication facility towers, lattice towers, and structures in all areas.” As this proposal moves forward, he would like to see more specific information regarding the equipment.

Mr. Mosher feels different standards should be applied to arterials and commercial areas versus residential areas.

Regarding colocation and clustering, Mayor Marshall said Council would like to see additional visual examples of how this would look in residential areas.

Mary Kate Berens, Legal Planner, noted that Comprehensive Plan amendments addressing wireless communications facilities, as previously discussed by Council, will move forward to a public hearing on June 12 or 19 before the Planning Commission.

(c) Budget Discussion – Performance Measures

Discussion of this item was postponed.

Mayor Marshall declared the meeting adjourned at approximately 9:40 p.m.

Myrna L. Basich
City Clerk

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